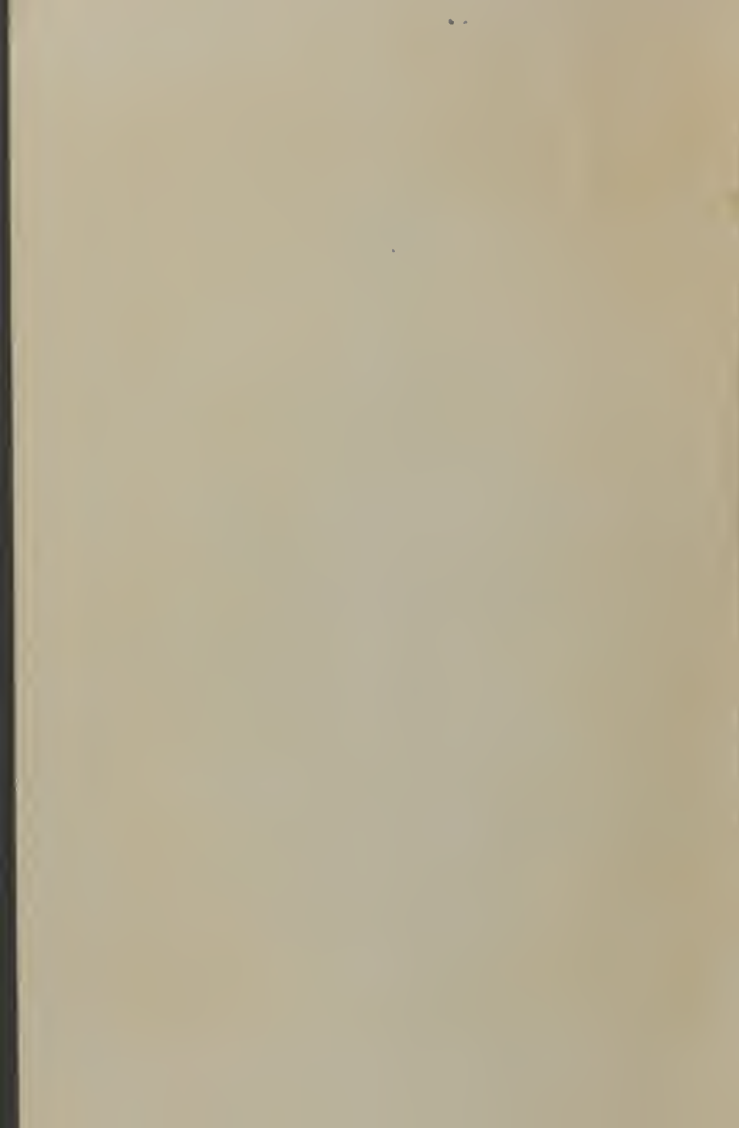
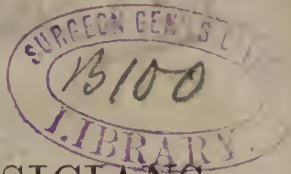


VATTIER (J.L.)

To the physicians
of the
State of Ohio.







TO THE PHYSICIANS OF THE STATE OF OHIO.

"He's a bad Surgeon, that for pity spared,
The part corrupted, till the gangrene spread,
And all the body perish; he that's merciful
Unto the bad, is cruel to the just."

303446
Washington, D.C.

IN a published letter addressed to Dr. Robt. Thompson, by Dr. Marmaduke B. Wright, late professor in the Medical College of Ohio, the Institution and its Trustees are arraigned in a manner that seems to demand some notice. The temper and spirit of the letter will undoubtedly meet with that rebuke which it so justly merits from all disinterested and dispassionate persons. But its false statements and malignant designs may not be so readily comprehended or exposed by persons living at a distance from the city; and lest silence under its imputations should by any be construed into an acknowledgment of their truth, I deem it proper to make a brief reply, even at the hazard of giving to the ex-professor an importance to which neither his professional position in the State, or his standing at home entitle him.

It is quite natural that Dr. Wright should ascribe his displacement from the Faculty to "personal pique," or to some other equally improbable motive operating upon the Board of Trustees, rather than to its only true and proper

[Circular note 1850]

cause. His wounded pride, it will be perceived, is deeply concerned in making out for himself the best possible case, but its suggestions I hope will not be received as true, nor can it be expected that they should meet the sanction of tacit acquiescence. It is utterly false that the Board of Trustees were influenced in their action towards Dr. Wright by any private griefs or by "personal pique." The character of the gentleman composing the Board, is a sufficient refutation of the slander where they are known, and where they are not, the extreme improbability of such an extensive combination of Trustees, as is pre-supposed against any professor upon *merely personal* grounds, may be confidently relied upon to rebut the calumny. The organic law of the Institution requires eight out of eleven Trustees to remove a professor, a provision competent surely if any be, to protect him in his rights and to shield him against prejudice and hasty judgment.

To all who have had the opportunity or the interest to look into the condition of the Medical College of Ohio for some time past, it is well known that Dr. Wright failed to give satisfaction to his classes, and in many instances so great was this discontent that it was embodied in petitions for his removal, numerous signed by the students and suppressed only by the urgent entreaties of one or more of his respected colleagues. To these efforts of his amiable associates, and to a certain reputation which he contrived to create for himself as a legislative manager, and tactician, the doctor has owed for many years his position in the school, rather than to his talents or capacity as a teacher. These props were not sufficient, however, in the judgment of the present Board of Trustees, to maintain a decided unpopular professor in the Institution, and Dr. Wright was accordingly displaced. The mode adopted for this purpose was recommended by a sincere desire, on the part of the Board, to give as little offence as practicable, in the discharge of a painful duty, and not as the late professor observes, for the purpose of

accomplishing indirectly what they were afraid to attempt directly. It is well ascertained that the professor could have been reached more promptly by a direct action upon his chair than by a vacation of all the chairs. Of the Trustees who saw the necessity for Dr. Wright's removal, and were at all times ready to vote for the measure as an independent one, there were several who hesitated to accomplish it by means that might possibly prove offensive to other professors, whose talents and general demeanor commanded their confidence and respect. In connection with this subject it should be distinctly remembered that the chairs were vacated almost unanimously, eight to one, and the same vote could have been obtained at a previous meeting of the Trustees to displace Dr. Wright by a special action upon his chair. But the Board preferred to accomplish their object in a manner which they supposed would be less offensive and mortifying. Upon a review of the whole case, the Trustees believe that they have discharged their duty to the College in the premises, and nothing but their duty.

The attempt of Dr. Wright to excite the professional sentiment and feelings of the country physicians, against the government of the Institution is in perfect harmony with his character—a pestilent and restless agitator, his whole career while connected with the College, was characterized by ceaseless manœuvres to keep himself in place; and now that he is out, to undermine its prospects by unscrupulous fabrications. That there ever was any just reason for charging any of our predecessors in the Board of Trustees with disregarding “the voice of the profession throughout the State” I do not believe. On the part of the present Board, I repel the charge, and demand the proof. Who of us, or of the profession of the city, has ever taunted country doctors, or propounded the insolent query “what do country doctors know about the affairs of the Medical College of Ohio?” I venture to say not one can be named. In our labor of regenerating the College, acknowledged to be in

a prostrate and fallen condition, we disclaim allegiance to any division or section of doctors, founded upon locality, whether of country or city, we reject advice from none, and expect from all a hearty and cordial co-operation, in elevating the institution to a position worthy of the great State whose name it bears, and whose generous patronage it has shared: and in this expectation we have an abiding and unfaltering confidence.

The charge that the Trustees are utterly regardless of the public character of the Institution in appointments and removals, is unfounded, and comes with bad grace from Dr. Wright, who not many winters since, directed his whole legislative efforts to obtain the passage of a law to transfer the Institution in toto, to himself and to his colleagues, thereby desiring to secure to himself a professorship for life. But the remainder of the Faculty, to their credit be it said, entered their solemn protest against the measure.

The doctor, in his great grief for the *unfortunate condition* of the institution, proposes the following question,—“What is to be done to place the College above the malign influences which surround it, and to secure it against change! change!” and then replies by referring to the wisdom of the next Legislature for an answer; Evidently intimating that he will be there as a *lobby member*, and by his *great influence* and his undoubted qualifications for intrigue, succeed in placing the Institution in a position by which he may gratify his *excessive desire* to appear before a Board of *Concours* as a candidate for place; or demolish the College in toto and scatter the fragments into the hands of its enemies.

In his twaddle about his mission to the Legislature, his reference to Edward C. Roll, A. N. Riddle, and myself, there is a ridiculous assumption of consequence and display of vanity, at which one could scarcely repress his risible faculties, but for the depravity exhibited in the unblushing falsehood that he acted as the agent of the College and the Faculty; for I am fully authorized to state that he was not

appointed, delegated, or requested, by either the Trustees or Faculty, to go to Columbus last winter, on any business connected with the Institution, and that his visit to the metropolis wholly voluntary, has, like all his preceding agencies, real or pretended, but one object, that of securing himself in his professorship while he was neglecting its duties. The experience of the last few months and his failure to mould the Board of Trustees to suit his own purposes, has no doubt taught him that "clocks *wont* go as they are set," but all who are familiar with the doctor's character will at once admit as an axiom that,

"Irregular man's ne'er constant—never certain."

His first quotation from the poets reminds me of a little couplet as applicable to himself, but which I will not give. It alludes to a certain animal, the more he climbs the more he shows *a posteriori*.

Having thus very briefly noticed, and exposed the allegations and charges of the late Professor against the Trustees of the Medical College of Ohio, it is perhaps a work of supererogation to bestow any further attention upon his very unique pamphlet. There are a few points, however, in his letters to the Board to which it may be as well to make a concise reference. In the first epistle of the series, it will be perceived that, ever true to himself, he deprecates the vacation of the chairs, knowing full well that if that were once accomplished, he could not command the necessary vote to reinstate him.

In his second letter Dr. Wright insinuates the existence of charges against him, and demands an investigation; and on the last page of his pamphlet he introduces the yeas and nays on a resolution calling for charges and specifications. For what purpose this was done, it is difficult to imagine, unless it was to produce indirectly an impression on the minds of his readers that this vote was a test of his strength in the Board. If this was his object, I must pronounce it

a disingenious artifice and unworthy even of Dr. Wright himself.

The demand for an investigation was made undoubtedly with the design of raising the cry of persecution, and not with any expectation that it would or ought to be granted. The whole thing within itself is preposterous, and a solitary example of such a proceeding cannot, I believe, be found in the various mutations and revolutions which have marked the history of our own or of other Medical Colleges.

When the Trustees of an Institution become satisfied that a professor is not discharging his duties ably or acceptably, or that he is in any other manner a hinderance to its prosperity, they have an undoubted right (nay it is their imperative duty), to remove him, regardless of all clamor which may be raised by himself or by sympathizing friends. Such was precisely the case of Dr. Wright. The Trustees believed, on evidence satisfactory to themselves, and which they are persuaded would carry conviction to all other disinterested minds, that his continuance in the school was disadvantageous to it, and in leaving him out of the Faculty they simply discharged, in the least offensive manner, a duty which they were not at liberty to postpone or evade. They had no personal altercation and could have none with Dr. Wright, and they have not at any time indulged in unkind feelings towards him.

With this general defence of the Board of Trustees against the aspersions of Dr. Wright, I forbear on the present occasion to enter on the discussion of the many topics suggested by his letter. I have no disposition to prosecute the controversy, however just the provocation, or abundant the material, in a harsh spirit, and I trust when the excitement of the moment shall have passed away, that a more modest and truthful appreciation of himself may teach the gentleman that he is not wholly invulnerable on any one of the points which he has so imprudently raised—a word to the

wise is sufficient. Of the various objections to the late professor, his letter discloses one of which I was ignorant until it was unveiled by himself. It is peculiar in its character, and cannot be exhibited more appropriately than in his own language, and I leave it for the reader to judge whether he or I is most amenable to the charge of extending to the eclectics, "sympathy and secret aid."—"If", says this innocent martyr, "the (my) defamers promise to withdraw *their opposition* upon no other ground than that I shall cease *my opposition* to a full salivating use of calomel and to the Samson-like practice of olden times, I have only to say, that I will never yield principle to this extent while God lets me live, and whilst my experience, observations, and reflections, all teach me I am right. I feel it to be a moral duty on all appropriate occasions to wage a warfare against all such medical abominations." Now this seems to me very much like conjuring up spectres to fight them. All medical men of the present day are united in their opposition to what may be emphatically termed the abuse of calomel, and the gentleman only stands side by side with his brethren in his reprobation of "medical abominations." But let him beware lest his opposition to the abuse of calomel do not extend to its *use*, and that at some future time he be found with empirics catering for business by pandering to the ignorant prejudices of the vulgar. May this timely warning save him from so foul a degradation.

In conclusion of this reply, which has already extended beyond the limit I had prescribed to myself, I beg to give the gentleman this parting admonition, that when next he finds it necessary to bolster himself up by a laudatory letter from the Township Trustees, who really know as little about the Professors, and the Medical College of Ohio, as any other three worthy individuals in the community, he should be more careful to have the letter indited by some other

hand than his own. Chirography is often a most potent as well as unwelcome witness.

"His *effort* was a fine sample on the whole,
Of *Balderdash*, which the learn'd call *rigmarole*."

J. L. VATTIER, M. D.,
One of the Board of Trustees.

Cincinnati, May 27, 1850.

